

2 Tenant Relations Department

annual report

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/ The Newark Housing Authority misc

57 Sussex Avenue, Newark

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Preface

The Tenant Relations Division of the Newark Housing Authority deals with the problems of tenants. Early in the history of the public housing program, it was realized that to simply provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing for the tenants in public housing was not enough. Many of the families who moved into public housing came from severely underprivileged backgrounds; they knew little of the problems involved in living in a project, and often little about urban living. Adjustment to the stresses was not always easy and often managers of housing projects were asked to deal with families who had problems which required professional guidance.

Thus, the Tenant Relations Division was formed nine years ago to deal with families whose problems, if left unchecked, could damage the efficient operation of the entire project. It was partly a matter of efficiency; and, perhaps much more, the realization that families with problems must be helped.

The division each year takes stock of its activities and accomplishments and issues a report summarizing the results of the year's activities. The accompanying report is the ninth annual report of the Tenant Relations Division.

The Tenant Relations Division on August 31, 1963, concluded its ninth year of operations. During the year, referrals came to the division from all of the Authority's 17 housing projects including the three specially built for elderly tenants, (NJ 2-17, NJ 2-18, NJ 2-19), and Scudder Homes which was completed and tenanted during the fiscal year. The services of the division are now available to the 10,763 tenant families which constitute the Authority's present population.

During this ninth year of service, the work of the division continued along lines laid down during previous years. Staff workers made home visits; counseled in areas of housekeeping, rent-paying, and other tenancy matters; reviewed the Authority's rules and requirements; made referrals to social agencies for needed services; acted as liaison between agencies and tenants; assisted and advised tenant groups and councils; wrote evaluation and recommendation reports; performed the work of recording, planning, conferring, and other related tasks necessary to successfully carry out the work of the division. The division's work includes the careful day-by-day compilation of statistics.

The division endeavored throughout the fiscal year 1962/63, as in every preceding year, to fulfill its two broad objectives: -- (1) to work in close alliance with management and facilitate and make more effective management programs; and (2) to take such measures and develop such programs that would assist tenants in making good adjustment to project and community living. The work of the Tenant Relations Division is dominated by an interest in the welfare of the tenant.

Results of the year's work are presented in the following text and accompanying tables. During the year September 1, 1962 to August 31, 1963, the division received a total of 638 referrals. This included 16 Tenant Selection applications for public housing sent to the division for thorough screening.

Work continued on all cases still active as of the close of the last fiscal year, and on the 638 new referrals. The total number of cases handled during the year was 1156. During the previous fiscal year, ended August 31, 1962, the division handled a total of 1144 cases. The number of active cases handled during the last two years, the 8th and 9th fiscal years, represented peak years for the division.

To illustrate the ascending trend of the work, we list in Table 1 the number of cases handled each year by the division since the beginning of its program. It can be observed that the workload of years 1954/55 and 1955/56 has about doubled by year 1962/63.

TABLE 1

1954/55	501 cases
1955/56	657 cases
1956/57	1022 cases
1957/58	1100 cases
1958/59	1100 cases
1959/60	1080 cases
1960/61	1021 cases
1961/62	1144 cases
1962/63	1156 cases

Favorable results were achieved on the overwhelming majority of the cases handled during the year. The division was able this year as in past years to maintain its standard of between 75 and 80 per cent improvement. A total of 567 cases were closed during the year; 443 cases were closed with improvement. All cases were closed with a report to the manager describing the problem and the remedial steps taken.

Each referral that comes to the division is handled on an individual basis. The work of the division emphasizes individual family adjustment. Referrals deal with tenant problems, those involving lease violations and those involving health, economic and social difficulty. The problems require home visits and

counselling. Referred tenants are interviewed, given considerate and sympathetic treatment and an opportunity to resolve the problem. Contacts are made with agencies or relatives in the tenant's behalf. During this fiscal year, the staff workers made thousands of visits to tenants for the purpose of friendly, informal interviews. In innumerable cases, the division arranged assistance programs with cooperating agencies for tenants with health, economic or social problems.

Of the 587 cases completed and closed during the year, 96 failed to improve despite rehabilitative measures, and at the conclusion of service still presented situations that either seriously interfered with project operations or threatened the peace and well-being of other tenants. In every one of the 96 cases ending in an eviction recommendation, a full and detailed report was made to management; the report further serving as support for the Authority's position when these cases came to court.

Results of the 587 cases closed during the year are classified in Tables 11 and 111 which follow, and percentile comparisons are made with previous years:

TABLE 11

Closed with:

Improvement	443	75.5
Moveout	48	8.2
Eviction Recommended	<u>96</u>	<u>16.3</u>
	587	100.0

TABLE III

	<u>Year 1962/63</u>	<u>Year 1961/62</u>	<u>Composite Prev. Yrs.</u>
Closed with:			
Improvement	75.5%	77.1%	77.1%
Moveout	8.2	7.7	9.7
Eviction			
Recommended	<u>16.3</u>	<u>15.2</u>	<u>13.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0

The above tables indicate a 1.1% rise in eviction recommendations for this fiscal year. An explanation for this may lie in the fact that there is observable growth in the number and intensity of social problems as they affect tenancy. The growing social unrest that is taking place in urban communities is reflected in project areas. This is revealed in our year-by-year figures.

This year we have in Table IV classified by problem the cases which ended unsuccessfully, selecting the primary problem that led to the eviction recommendation:

TABLE IV

Habitual Rent Delinquency	3 cases	3.1%
Falsifying Income and Family Composition	7 "	7.3
Poor Housekeeping and Child Care	17 "	17.7
Household Discord--Noise	19 "	19.8
Juvenile Delinquency & Vandalism	22 "	22.9
Undesirable Conduct (narcotics, crime, immorality, alcoholism)	<u>28 "</u>	<u>29.2</u>
	96 "	100.0

Classifying the first three categories (Rent Delinquency, Income and Composition, Poor Housekeeping) as tenancy failure; and the last three categories (Household Discord, Juvenile Delinquency, Undesirable Conduct) as social failure; there is clear preponderance of social over tenancy difficulty, (72% social, 28% tenancy). It can also be seen that the major reason for eviction is Undesirable Conduct, and that the two classifications, Juvenile Delinquency and

Undesirable Conduct, account for more than half the cases which end in eviction. While the division takes a tolerant position toward its tenants, it is on guard against tenants who exert unwholesome and corruptive influences.

Corroborative evidence that social problems are overtaking purely tenancy problems can be found in problem chart for 1962/63 (Table V). Many families are referred for more than one problem and the 638 new referrals represented a total of 733 problems. Problems as indicated by management on the referrals are carefully noted and classified. Table V lists the problems by frequency and by percentage, and makes comparison with previous years.

TABLE V

<u>Problem</u>	<u>No. Referrals</u> <u>1962/63</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>1962/63</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>1961/62</u>	<u>Composite</u> <u>Previous Yrs.</u>
Hallways	14	1.9	4.9	3.5
Housekeeping	79	10.8	34.2	17.1
Rent Delinquency	44	6.0	2.3	3.8
Vandalism	13	1.8	1.4	1.9
Discord-Noise	94	12.8	9.4	9.3
Juvenile Delinquency	97	13.2	7.2	8.5
Between Neighbors	77	10.5	9.1	9.6
Parental Neglect	17	2.3	3.3	3.1
Family Problem (Chronic Illness, Financial distress, Senility)	86	11.8	9.3	12.5
Income and Family Comp.	108	14.8	10.4	16.5
Undesirable Conduct (Narcotics, Crime, Immorality)	81	11.0	6.9	11.1
Others	23	3.1	1.6	3.1
	733	100.0	100.0	100.0

Shifts in figures from year to year may serve as a barometer for problem trends. There has been a noticeable decline in categories Hallways and Housekeeping. Housekeeping which in the past had first place in frequency, this year fell to 6th place. The problem which ranked highest was the problem of unreported Income and Family Composition changes. Undesirable Conduct (problems of narcotics, crime, immorality, alcoholism) has been moving steadily upward and has gone from 8th or 9th place to 5th place. Juvenile Delinquency has climbed through the years and this year holds second place in frequency. The problem of Household Discord has moved to third place; and Family Problems (problems of chronic illness, financial distress, senility) has taken 4th place in our frequency chart.

Listing in order of frequency the seven major problems for which tenants have this year been referred:

- 1 - Income and Composition
- 2 - Juvenile Delinquency
- 3 - Discord-Noise
- 4 - Family Problems
- 5 - Undesirable Conduct
- 6 - Housekeeping
- 7 - Between Neighbors

Over the years, the division has strengthened its methods and procedures. Staff members now quickly recognize factors which may disrupt family living. Agencies respect the division for the worth of its program and its ability to coordinate well with their programs. Community agencies share with the Authority the wish to keep the family in the project if at all possible.

The division has often been called upon to take on the role of coordinating agency, reaching out for a variety of services as needed or assembling services for a family's total aid.

One such case in point is the case of the A family.

Case of the A family

The A family consists of parents around thirty and six children ranging in ages from two to eight. Since birth, two of the children have had Cerebral Palsy and three children are deaf. The father is a steady worker and earns a fair salary, but medical expenses are high.

The family was first referred February 1961 because they wanted a transfer to another project and this revealed the plight of the family. The transfer was requested because the family wanted to be near the hospital clinic to which the children were taken for treatment. The transfer was arranged and accomplished. The manager, in computing the family's rent, took into consideration the family's medical expenses.

Mrs. A is a soft-spoken, gentle woman. She has courage and stamina and is alert to the needs of her children, but she is not strong physically. When the division worker first contacted the A family in February 1961, only one of the children went to school. The other five stayed home. They were peevish and demanding, and the calls on Mrs. A's time and attention were constant. In addition to caring for so many sick children, Mrs. A had the responsibilities of housework, shopping, cooking. Mrs. A was often overwhelmed to the point where she could not function.

At that time the worker reached out for home services. Visiting Nurse and Chr-Ill responded quickly and with the help of these agencies, the weight on Mrs. A eased and she was able to control the situation.

Two years passed before the next referral. At this time, four of the children were of school age, three attending Bruce Street School for the deaf. With most of the children away at school, the home agencies felt they could suspend their services.

However, there was more trouble for the A family. Marital difficulty developed between Mr. & Mrs. A. The husband is a silent, brooding man, who

Case of the A family (Cont'd)

feels thwarted by the multiple misfortunes of his family. He became morose and quarrelsome. He snapped at his wife and children and the children were afraid to go near their father.

The A's were referred to a family agency. After several consultations, the agency referred Mr. A to the county mental clinic, and the clinic advised commitment. Mr. A entered a mental hospital voluntarily in the spring of 1963.

Hospitalization of the breadwinner meant sudden cessation of family income. Referral was made to the Welfare Division for emergency aid and the agency was quick to respond. The family was never without adequate funds, but Mr. A's hospitalization had a depressing effect upon Mrs. A, and there were fears for her health.

Mrs. A appeared to have no close relatives or friends to whom she could turn for comfort. The division felt it would cheer Mrs. A to have a Friendly Visitor call at her home. The A's are a Protestant family and it was arranged through the Protestant Center that a Friendly Visitor come regularly to the A's. The Center made an excellent choice and sent a cheerful, friendly motherly type person. Mrs. A and the children have grown fond of their Visitor and look forward to her visits.

Mrs. A was further aided during the summer by camperships for some of the children. Mr. A came home in July and resumed work, ending the financial need. At the close of the summer the children returned to school. Friendly Visitor services are continuing.

When school opened, one of the children was found to need special glasses and another child to need special shoes. With the cooperation of social workers at the school and the hospital clinic both of these needs were met.

Although in total, the case of the A family presents a particularly complicated and stressful situation, in its separate aspects--chronic illness, mental illness, marital discord, sudden loss of income, need for home services, campership-needs for children, paralyzing discouragement--each of these aspects represents situations that can be multiplied hundreds of times in the course of our work.

We have in our recital of the A case described a dilemma in human terms which statistics cannot do. There are intangibles involved in every program of human relations whether it is the delivery of a Thanksgiving Basket or achieving placement for a retarded child. "Improvement" is a greatly over-simplified label for a family that has given up and then is restored to normal functioning.

Working with all people requires a large amount of understanding and patience. This is especially true in dealing with the elderly. During the fiscal year, the division closed 587 cases, of which 96 dealt with elderly families. The present ratio of referred elderly families to other families is one to six. It can be anticipated that with the three new projects solely for elderly tenants, that ratio will become higher.

The 96 elderly families of the 587 cases closed during the year were referred for the following problems:-

- Clarification of Income
- Health problems
- Income problems
- Between neighbor difficulties
- Requests for transfer

Out of the 96 cases, 83 cases were closed with improvement. The problems were favorably resolved, the tenants continued in occupancy. There were none among the 96 which were closed with a recommendation of eviction. Fifteen cases ended in a voluntary move-out. Included were several deaths, and tenants who decided of their own accord that they could no longer maintain a home and left to

live with children, relatives, or to enter nursing homes. Most of the 98 families were single person families. The number in each group were:

28 - Elderly couples
11 - Elderly Members of families
59 - Elderly single persons

The advent of three new public housing projects solely for elderly tenants has aroused great sociological interest in Newark, and has marked a turning-point in the city's history. A substantial proportion of Newark's elderly population now resides in project areas. Community and welfare organizations are excited by the opportunity to bring expanded health and recreational services direct to these centers, and many studies are being made on ways to provide more fully for the social needs of the elderly.

It is hoped with the amenities provided by specially designed housing and with the social services which will be made available, elderly tenants will be able to look forward to extended years of independent living.

Staff members of the division give unselfishly of their time and energies during and after working hours. Members of the staff continue to serve on city-wide and neighborhood committees, on boards for social betterment, and participate in a wide variety of community activities.

More than nine years ago the Authority demonstrated its concern for its tenants by creating a task force to aid tenants with problems and open up to them avenues of assistance. The Tenant Relations Division has been the task force for that endeavor. The division is now moving into its tenth year of operations, soon to complete a decade of service. It looks forward in the years ahead to provide increased incentives and opportunities for happier, healthier family living.